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ABSTRACT

First defining and tracing the historical background of home schooling in the United States, this paper then researches how home schooling families are using computers and online technologies. Two separate surveys were conducted. The first was a voice-to-voice survey to determine a computer usage baseline from a population of 103 home schooling families. The second survey employed a checklist to examine posted online information for and about home schooling. Sixty-two sites with adequate content, representing 137 home schooled children, were surveyed from August to September 1996. Checklist data were compared in four different ways: (1) reasons for home schooling; (2) methods of home schooling; (3) reasons for using online services; and (4) ages of home schooled children using online services. The following conclusions were drawn: families home schooling for religious reasons were more likely to have computers, but less likely to have an online service; use of computers in home schooling families across the country was about 70% and those with online services, about 17%; all of home schooling families with online services used e-mail for social reasons and about 92% used e-mail for information; recreational use of online services made up about 68%; less than 7% of the home schoolers engaged in online classes; packaged online services were used more by religious home schoolers; larger families used generic online services; the mean ages of unschoolers were younger than those of the total population; unschoolers made up about one third of the home schooling population; and about 60% of the families with online compatible computers had an online service. Six tables and 15 figures summarize the data. (Contains 48 references.) (Author/AEF)

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HOW HOMESCHOOLERS USE THE INTERNET:

A Study Based on a Survey of On-line Services

A Thesis Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

Salem-Teikyo University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Barbara Allison

IR018526

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Abstract

After defining and tracing the historical background of home schooling in the United States, this paper researches how home schooling families are using computers and on-line technologies. Two separate surveys were conducted. The first was a voice to voice survey to determine a computer usage baseline from a population of one hundred and three home schooling families. The second survey employed a checklist to survey posted on-line information for and about home schooling. Sixty-two sites, representing one hundred and thirty-seven home schooled children, with adequate content were surveyed from August to September of 1996. Checklist data were compared in four different ways, (1) reasons for home schooling, (2) methods of home schooling, (3) reasons for using on-line services, (4) ages of home schooled children using on-line services. This paper includes six tables and fifteen figures that summarize data. (47 references)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Harrison County, West Virginia, the number of home schooled children has risen from twelve to eighty in the last five years (47:np). McCarty reported estimates from early 1970s which indicated that about fifteen thousand children were receiving home schooling (31:3). Alex cited the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) figure for 1994 as between 750,000 to one million, or about one percent of the school aged population. The HSLDA expects this number to grow until it levels off at five percent (21:2). Mayberry believed that the increase in home schooling is a symptom of the declining credibility of the public schools. She alleged that structural conflict is rooted in a state's attempt to balance between current educational policies that support popular democratic ideologies while maintaining institutional legitimacy (30:21). As a result of this struggle, Natale reported that home schoolers are turning to on-line classes for specialized course work. Technology has redefined home schooling as the world wide web brings information to rural places

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(13:37). This study will explore current uses of the on-line technology.

Statement of the Problem

What percentage of home schoolers use current on-line services and how do they use them: for informational, recreational or social reasons?

Home schooling is allowed if the parents meet the state's requirements for "school," which are different in each state. Those who meet all requirements are then exempted from the compulsory education laws. This excludes home schooling from direct government statistical data. Slough concluded that a lack of concrete empirical research fuels skepticism toward home schooling (39:12). In the research data of today, there are three research documents published addressing home schooling since 1993. Dalaimao's case study on Public School-Based Home Schooling Program published June 1996 (5:47), Alex's research in Home Schooling and Socialization of Children, Eric 1994 (20:3), and Thompson's study on The Impact of Structural Costs on Home Schooling Decisions in Rural and Non-Rural Districts, ERIC 1994 (40:3).

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The technology of on-line services is changing rapidly. Krumenader's breakdown of internet domains cited education as making up 18.9 percent of the Web sites. Net host growth is projected to double in size every twelve to fifteen months for the next three years (8:74).

Major purposes of the study, were to: (1) create a baseline percentage of home schoolers with access to on-line services at home, (2) survey home schooling users of on-line services for demographic data and type of services they consume, and (3) compare data of on-line users between packaged service providers (such as CompuServe and aol) and Netscape based systems.

Assumptions of the Study, are (1) the sample is adequate in size, (2) the sample is typical of home schoolers in general, (3) data collected for this study will be out dated by the time of publishing, (4) sixty percent of the computers that typical home schoolers are currently using lack the hardware to connect to internet services, (5) the instruments are valid, (6) information given from people surveyed on the telephone and from on-line communications are current and correct, (7) surveys

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are limited to homeschooling population in the United States, and (8) instruments for internet study are limited to analysis of posted information.

Limitations are, (1) Williams concluded that home schooling research is in its infancy, with virtually all of the studies having been completed since 1980 (42:4). (2) Thompson observed that gathering systematic data from home school parents is very difficult. Also, legal statutes protect the names of parents, and organizations refuse to give out names (40:4). (3) Slough related that the majority of the research has used self-reporting surveys or interviews to collect data of demographic and descriptive nature (39:12). Dalaimo supported her research with studies completed in 1988. Data in this paper, were collected on a voluntary basis using voice to voice surveys reflecting one hundred home schooling families and/or via on-line communication reflecting a target of eighty home schoolers. (4) Checklists were used to evaluate on-line data as Thompson reported that gathering systematic data from home school parents is very difficult as there is a distrust of formal inquires and, among some, an

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antigovernment bias (40:4).

The Definitions of Terms

Charter schools are broadly defined by Amaler as a publicly funded autonomous school operating within another public school (22:2).

Creativity, according to Williams, is the domain distinct from intelligence, defined as divergent thinking composed of originally, fluency, flexibility and elaboration (42:5).

Homepage as defined by Krumenaker, is a place where people publish information on the internet (8:69).

Homeschooling as defined by Preiss, is the educational alternative in which parents/guardians assume the primary responsibility for the education of their children (33:1).

Home Study as defined by Malitz, is a method of instruction designed for students who live at a distance from the teaching

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institution (28:213).

Internet as defined by Krumenaker, is an interconnected network of computers (8:69).

Net host as defined by Krumenaker, is an organization that publishes and maintains Web Sites (8:69).

Unschooling is a subset of home schools, defined by Anderson as fundamentally active child-driven learning(45:2).

Web Site as defined by Krumenaker, is a place to get information using the Internet (8:70).

Abbreviations Employed in the Study

CHE or community home education defined by Dalaimo as a public school-based home schooling program that is designed to serve as a liaison between home schoolers and traditional educators (5:4).

HSLDA Home School Legal Defense Association (21:2).

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CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of the related literature will contain an overview of the history of home schooling in the United States, from its colonial roots to present day trends. Priess defined home schooling as an educational alternative in which parents, or guardians, assume the primary responsibility for the education of their children (33:1). The increasing prevalence of home schooling, according to Mayberry, is a symptom of the declining credibility of state-sponsored education (30:2). This paper will trace the roots of this decline, provide an overview of the current research in home schooling and relate the impact that new technologies are having on homeschooling.

Historical Context

Homeschooling has been in existence since humans have been communicating. One of the first written records of homeschooling can be found in the Bible. Ray cited the roots of the Biblical importance of home schooling as taught by Moses after he received the ten commandments with a quotation from the Bible " . . .

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Impress them on you children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up . . . Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates . . ." (37:3).

Regarding formal education in North America during the European colonization on through the first fifty years of American independence (1633-1830), Fox noted that it was designed for the privileged. Most established private schools were church-related schools. Informal or "Dame Schools" were institutions where housewives taught their youth "letters" and church catechism. Today people would call these schools "home schools." The movement for public education developed slowly before 1830 and changed rapidly with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, which began in the middle of the nineteenth century (25:9)

According to Pratt, the first public funding of schools in the United States started in 1794, with the states supporting already existing private schools which offered free schooling to the poor. These schools were mostly funded by Protestant philanthropic groups

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(3:165). Between 1815 and 1855 New York City's population exploded, with two-thirds of the newcomers being Irish Roman Catholics (3:169). The Catholics unsuccessfully petitioned for state funding, which advanced the principle of church-state separation. New York passed a law in 1842 that denied public funds to any school ". . . *in which any book or books containing any sectarian compositions shall be used in the course of instruction,*" (3: 189). Fowler stressed that public and private school interests collided when Oregon tried to outlaw all private schools. The Supreme Court upheld private education in Pierce v. Society of Sisters, 268 U.S. 510 (1925) as a property right (1:286). Mc Carthy identified this law as the first to establish the right to impose penalties on parents who disregarded compulsory school attendance laws (31:2). This gave the states legal authority to regulate private alternatives to public education and eliminated homeschooling as an alternative for many people. Fox argued that the United States Supreme Court ruling, which struck down the separate but equal schools and called for integration, Brown v. Board of Education (1954) established the

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importance of compulsory school attendance as whites were forced by law to continue to attend recently integrated schools. Not until Wisconsin v. Yoder (1977), was home schooling to become an option for many parents. In that case the court ruled, based on the Amish mode of life, that the parents' rights to direct the religious upbringing of their children must be weighed against the state's interest in educating children, and home schooling became an option for many parents (25:11).

The alternative schools were also developing in Europe at this time and according to Alex, also affected the alternative education movement in the United States. Waldorf Education, founded in 1919 by an Austrian philosopher Rudolf Seiner, designed his curriculum to "*nurture the intuition, imagination and spiritual capacities of the child.*" The Montessori Schools, founded in Italy by Maria Montessori, designed teaching methods to compensate for the developmental problems the children suffered, stemming from living in an "*unstimulating environment*" (20:4).

In the United States, Joyce contended that Dewey

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gave rise to group investigation or the democratic model of teaching, through which democratic procedures and scientific methods of inquiry were used by students to attack academic problems (2:36). This philosophy of Dewey's was a marked departure from the "top down" teaching style used for the first half of the century. In the 1950's Carl Rogers developed the nondirective teaching model. He believed that positive human relationships enable people to grow (2:263). The teacher becomes the facilitator who develops a personal relationship with the students and guides their learning.

By the late 1960's, Ray concluded that the "*one best system*" of public education was in crisis and under fire. The social activism of the 1960s and the social tensions of the 1970s and 1980s created a movement where some saw conventional schools and compulsory education as forms of indoctrination and social control. During this era "*free schools,*" "*community schools*" and "*alternative schools*" began (37:3).

The alternative school movement contributed to the

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emergence of home schooling in several ways. Fox stated that alternative school advocates criticized public schools and created their own options outside the system using non-certified personnel. Alternative schools allowed parents and children a choice among different teaching methods and curricula. Existing alternative schools provided curricular and legal support for home schools (25:11).

Enrollment in Catholic schools peaked in 1965-1966, Flemming concluded, when they constituted 87 percent of nonpublic school enrollment. By 1982 their share of nonpublic enrollment dropped to 64 percent. The decline in Catholic education corresponds to the soaring enrollment in evangelical schools, which increased by 627 percent between 1965 and 1982. Dissatisfaction over a lack of discipline, abandonment of God-centered education and the espousal of humanistic rationale in the public schools, led to the founding of Christian day schools (6:517).

Current Developments and Issues

Mayberry believed that the declining credibility of public schools was caused by structural conflicts rooted

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in the state's attempt to balance its dual imperatives of accumulation and legitimation (30:1). She went on to say that states reflect these conflicts in current educational policies that support popular democratic ideologies to an increasingly diversified society where state institutions confront an ever-growing set of demands that must be met if institutional legitimacy is to be maintained. These ideologies are in contradiction with those transmitted in other agencies of socialization, especially the family (30:21).

In Amsler's opinion, the call to improve education through school choice assumes that introducing competition into the current public education system will force schools either to improve or lose students. Open enrollment within and between districts has started alternative schools within the public schools. Minnesota was the first to start charter schools that allowed students in the eleventh and twelveth grades an option of finishing high school in a post-secondary institution (22:2).

San Diego City School District developed a program that recognized the parents' right to direct the

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religious upbringing as upheld in Wisconsin v. Yoder (1977). Based on research that revealed that a cooperative relationship between home and public schools provides the best educational experience for students, Dalaimao reported that the district started Community Home Education (CHE). They designed this program to serve as a liaison between home schoolers and traditional educators (5:21).

The current round of policy talk about national directives for education amounts to, as quoted from Trice, "*national/state student-teacher-school performance goals-standards-testing-assessment accountablitiy-control for a better more competitive America.*" He went on to say that current national educational policy of this type is bound to be quite "*complex and variegated, and, thus, too slippery to get a firm hold on,*" now he sees the Dismantler-Localizers movement, the transfer of as much money and responsibility to the states as possible, to have the upper hand (17:36). Pipho supported this view as he reported many districts and some states moving toward collaborative decision making and use of site-based

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councils (15:270).

Home educators face a conglomeration of regulations, statutes and laws, which Preiss observed, are different in each state. Responsibly done, home schooling is protected by the United States Constitution, but regulated by individual states. For the most part, home educators must apply for an exemption of the compulsory school attendance laws by providing an instructional plan that satisfies their state's educational requirements (33:1).

Lines observed that by 1986, every state permitted home instruction in some form. The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Wisconsin v. Yoder (1977) a new wave of court cases, not testing whether home schooling should be permitted, but the extent to which the states may regulate it (10:523). In the early 1970s, only a handful of educational institutions enrolled children in a home curriculum. The oldest of these is Calvert School Home Study International founded in 1908. Based on their enrollment, Lines estimated that between ten thousand and fifteen thousand children were home schooled in the early 1970s. Lines went on to estimate

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the home schooling population for 1986 to be between 120,000 and 260,000 with 30 percent in grades nine through twelve (10:519-520). Klipsch cited that in 1991 a Department of Education study reported that between 248,500 and 353,300 children were home schooled. In 1994 the National Home Education Research Institute estimated that 500,000, or one percent of the total school-age population, was home schooled. The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) projected that home schooling numbers will continue to grow until they level off at 5 percent of the school-age population. In support of this claim, HSLDA cited the phone blitz aimed at federal lawmakers, that successfully lobbied Congress to exempt private schools and home schools from teacher certification requirements in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education act, which generated between 500,000 and one million phone calls over an eight-day period (7:47). Lines concluded that because many children are home schooled for only a few years, the percentage of children who reach age eighteen with some home schooling experience will be larger than one percent (26:2). McCarthy suggested that many parents do

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not report that their children are not enrolled in school because of the "equivalency" requirements imposed by the states, and it is left to local school authorities to discover their violation of compulsory school attendance laws (31:3).

Rays' review of the research on the characteristics of home schooling families, found the following major characteristics: (1) both parents have attended or graduated from college, (2) both parents are active in the home schooling process with the mother/homemaker as the primary teacher, (3) household income (in 1986 dollars) is between $20,000 and $30,000 per year, (4) more than 70 percent attend religious services, Ray cited 65 percent in his research, with a variety of religious backgrounds represented, (5) formal instruction begins at 5.5 years of age, (6) ratios of boys to girls being home schooled are nearly equal, (7) 70 percent of the children are between nine and twelve years old, (8) the educational program is flexible and highly individualized, involving both homemade and purchased materials (9) formal instruction uses three hours per day, (10) they study a wide range of

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conventional subjects, with an emphasis on math, reading and science, and (11) they operate the home school for more than two years (37:8). He went on to compare previously stated data with national statistics, and found that the only two percentages were not within normal limits. Religious service attendance has national norms of 40 percent, versus 70 percent for the home schooling population. The United States Bureau of the Census reported that in 1985 the average family contained 3.23 persons while the average home school family consisted of two parents and three children, or five persons (37:9).

The decision to home school is not only a pedagogical decision, but according to Van Galen, a public declaration of the parent's belief in the institution of the family (41:27). Home schooling is not without problems, as parents encounter disapproval from friends and family and the public intrusion from the highly bureaucratic regulation of home schooling (41:28). She went on to explain that home schoolers enjoy a tremendous amount of child-adult interaction by highly involved parents who are rewarded by becoming

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some "significant others" to their children (41:45).

Mayberry profiled four categories of home schoolers. Religious and new age home schooling families are the two categories who do so for ideological reasons. Home schooling makes sense for them because it provides a way to reproduce their way of life by controlling the content of their children's education (29:8). Religious home-based educators reject the secular orientation of public schools and view home schooling as a means to ensure that they raise their children with a belief in the authority of the scriptures (29:9). New Age families base their belief upon metaphysical philosophies, that the ultimate source of authority lies not with God but within each individual. They want control to nurture family unity and the mutual awareness of oneness and interrelatedness of all reality.

(29:10). Two other categories, the socio-relational and academic home schoolers, are concerned with the pedagogical environment. Socio-relational families want the parent-child relationship to extend as long as possible, while protecting their children from possible

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negative peer influences and damaging socialization experiences (29:11). Academic home schoolers believe that one-on-one instruction allows children to learn at their own pace and to develop their own style of learning (29:12). In summary, Mayberry saw several common themes in home schooling families: their desire for family unity, their desire to protect or isolate their children from unwanted ideologies or influences, and their desire to claim control of their child's education (29:13).

Detractors of home schooling raise questions about the social and emotional development of home schooled children. Stough's research compared thirty home schooled families with thirty-two conventionally schooled families with children ages seven to fourteen. She found that the results indicated that there was ". . . *no statistically significant difference between the home schooled versus the conventionally schooled sample in terms of social sufficiency, self-concept, or presence of emotional indicators,*" (39:4). Reynolds' case study of a home schooling family found that the parents felt it was their responsibility and duty to coach their

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children in the proper ways of conducting themselves with each other, and with other children (38:14).

In a study of creativity in home schooled children, Williams postulated that children found in the home schooling environment are creative, not because home schooling made them that way, but because they were already more creative than their peers. The home schooling environment attracted them because of the greater opportunities for freedom and flexibility that it affords (42:20). His research found that more than 90 percent of responding parents saw the instructional environment focused upon learning as a process rather than a goal (42:13).

Potential leadership was not affected in Montgomery's study. She cited that the message those home schooling children receive from their parents, both implicitly and explicitly, is that they value them as capable and special people. Couple this with their parents as role models, nurturing leadership at least as well as does the conventional system does. The perception of home schooled students as isolated, uninvolved and protected from peer contact is simply not

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supported by her study. She goes on to say that students reported having increased social contact and group participation because school required less of their time (32:44).

In a study on the development of cognitive intellect affect by non-conventional schooling with children aged six to thirteen, Ray found that students taught at home moved into formal thought between the ages of ten to eleven. These particular samples closely parallel Piaget's "*privileged*" group that far surpasses the "*average*" child or national averages (25:6). Alex cites Taylors findings that half the home schooled children score at or above the 91st percentile in national tests. This was 47 percent higher than the average, conventionally schooled child (21:3).

Pike stated in his article that although public schools served his white children well and he supported the principle of public education, he home schooled his non-Caucasian children. He found that the same teachers who held his white children to high standards would tolerate " *Any kind of academic slop . . .*" and out-of-line behavior from his non-Caucasian children (14:564).

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Public school superintendents, in Mahan's study, tended to disagree with the benefits stated by the experts in the literature, and exhibited an extreme animosity toward the issue of home schooling (27:42). Wynn remarked that public school educators were concerned that the increase in home schooling will eventually lead to a decrease in the control by public school officials over school attendance, and by that to a decrease in the effectiveness of the entire public school system (43:47). Stough indicated that the courts, reflecting society's ambivalence, have failed to sound a unified voice on the issue when challenged (39:7). According to McCarty, since 1982 more than thirty states have eased restrictions on home education programs. She concluded that as home schooling seems likely to increase, pressure on state legislatures to deregulate home schooling will also increase. State policy makers face the difficult decisions in striking the appropriate balance between state and individual interests. States, considering voucher proposals that would provide public funds for children to attend private schools, have not clarified the status of home education in relation to

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such plans (321:5-6).

Wilkinson postulated that the school of the future will be linked to local, national and international information networks, with many classes conducted on-line or via interactive television. He believed that virtually all home televisions will have data ports using high-speed circuits where students can connect remotely to interactive classes with teachers who may be in another country (18:37). According to Krumenaker, this technology is currently used for tele-commuting to work, remote banking services via MAC machines and custom cable services (7:69). Charp sees technology as making it possible to serve more learners and enabling learning to occur at any place at anytime (5:6). Natale reported technology is now on-line for the home schooler. One of these schools, Compu-High, was piloted with twenty-five enrolled students in 1994 by Clonlara School, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. To enroll in Compu-High, the student must pay a fee plus an additional dollar amount for each class (9:37).

Detractors such as Mosbacker warn that the current ". . . *lemming-like rush to the Internet by many schools*

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. . ." raised the question: "*Are the streets of the Internet paved with gold or littered with roadkill?*" He warns that if students are encouraged to become addicted to instantaneous bits of information, free of context and logical coherence, they will be ill-equipped for the rational dialogue and analysis required of citizens in a civil and literate culture (12:24-25). Krumenaker related that while surveys about the Internet proliferate, the population has proven difficult to measure and characterize (7:69). A spokesperson, Ethell, from HSLDA stated that technology is not going to replace one-on-one instruction for home schoolers; however, it is an additional resource and it is expanding (9:37).

Summary

In the review of the literature there is evidence that home schooling has come from families' desires to claim control of their child's education. Ray found that families who home school are not significantly unusual, but they have chosen an educational route for their children that is unique (37:1). Fox cited Toffler "*that the public schools in their present form are an*

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anachronism, a creature of industrial society." The movement from limited choices to multiple options is in every aspect of American society (25:7). People in the United States no longer see themselves in the melting pot, which was used to forge "one size fits all" education. The public schools face an ever growing set of demands that must be met if institutional legitimacy is to be maintained. Many families are choosing home schooling as an alterative to having their children exposed to ideologies that are in contradiction to their own beliefs (30:21).

Technology is changing how society interacts. Tele-commuting to work, remote banking services via MAC machines and custom cable serves are now commonplace. Current numbers cited by Krumenaker suggested that there are six million computers connected to the internet (7:74). Wilkinson's view of a 2006 connected secondary school, called for students tele-commuting to school (18:37). On-line schools are currently available. How home schoolers are currently using technology is an area that can support further study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURE

As the review of the literature revealed there is little current data about children who are presently home schooled. Two surveys were administered. The first survey collected data for this project, (1) created an empirical baseline to determine how many home schooling families currently have the technology to use on-line services, (2) surveyed how many sample families are currently using on-line services. The second surveyed on-line homeschoolers (1) type of use, recreational, E-mail, informational or formal instructional, (2) demographic data, such as sex, age, religious background and family size.

Collection of Data

The research design used for this study was quasi-experimental cohort groups. Leaders of home schooling support groups were surveyed by telephone to ascertain the estimated percentages of home schoolers who are currently on-line. This survey included three questions. (1) How many families are in your support group? (2) Of those families, how many own a computer?

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(3) How many families are currently using an on-line service? Cohort referral and published lists selected support group leaders. Information was collected from surrounding states including, Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and various regions of West Virginia.

The collected data was used as a base, to compare data against the demographics found within the on-line population. In the second survey checklists were used to analyze narrative information posted on on-line home schooling billboards, e-mailing lists and homepages. This checklist included (1) religious or non-religious (other) reasons for homeschooling (2) traditional or unschooler (3) number of children being home schooled in the family (4) reasons on-line services were used: recreational, E-mail, informational, or formal schooling. This survey compared packaged services with Netscape or World Wide Web use, (5) information was collected in August through October of 1996.

Treatment of the Data

The survey of leaders of home schooling support groups included a sample size of approximately one hundred families. Data from this group projected

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percentages of families that have computers with on-line compatible hardware, using 40 percent of the total computer number, and compared that percent with the percent of currently on-line home schoolers. This created the baseline for the number of home schooling families that could be using on-line services and a percent of those who currently have access to on-line services.

Checklist data compared information from packaged on-line groups to Netscape or World Wide Web users with percentage data. Demographic data comparisons such as: religious v. nonreligious, traditional v. unschooler, were evaluated and compared for function of usage. Target number for data collection for both groups was thirty entries.

Summary

This study used quasi-experimental cohort group comparison to answer the question of how home schoolers are currently using on-line services. To collect data, the use of voice to voice surveys and checklists of posted on-line information was utilized. Next, a comparison to find a relationship between demographic

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data and the method with which the home schooler connects to on-line services was investigated. This inquiry attempted to establish some baseline percentage data between the packaged on-line service provider (i.e. prodigy, aol, compuserve, MSN)
or a local access provider using an independent software package (i.e. Netscape navigator or cammelion etc.)usage data from packaged and Netscape based on-line services.

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CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The first problem of this study was to establish an empirical baseline of computer use in home schooling families. This was done by a telephone survey in which home schooling support group leaders were contacted. Those leaders were asked the following questions. (1) How many families are in your support group? (2) Of those families, how many own a computer? (3) How many families are currently using an on-line service? Cohort referrals and published lists were used to select support group leaders.

Seven leaders of support groups were contacted from August of 1996 to October of 1996. The total number of families represented was one hundred and three. Two group leaders contacted were active in more than one group. Leaders were asked to include each family in only one of the groups. Information on the name of the group was noted for later treatment of the data.

Information collected on this survey can be found in table 4.1. Groups surveyed are listed by their geographic location.

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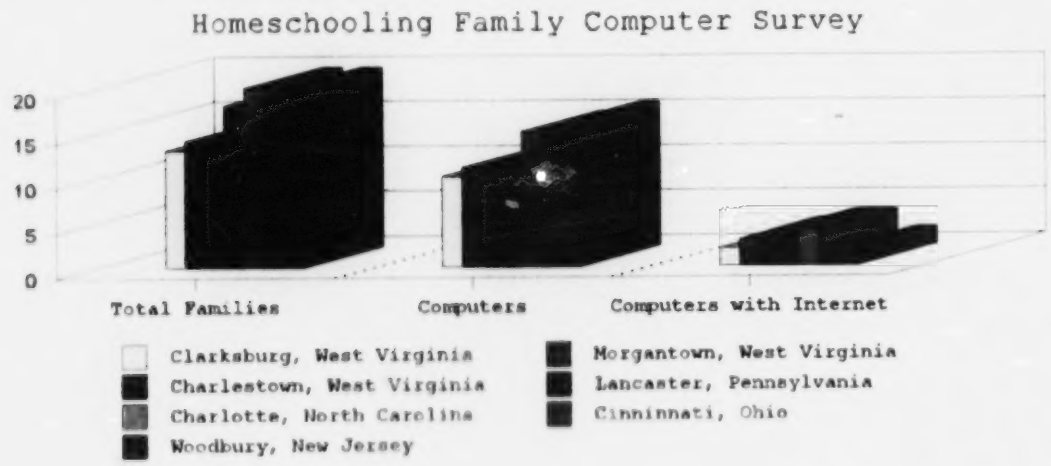
Table 4.1

Homeschooling Family Computer Survey

Location of Groups Surveyed	Total Families in Groups	Computers in Household	Internet in Household
Clarksburg, West Virginia	13	10	2
Morgantown, West Virginia	14	11	3
Charlestown, West Virginia	11	9	2
Lancaster, Pennsylvania	18	7	2
Charlotte, North Carolina	20	16	2
Cinninnati, Ohio	7	4	0
Woodbury, New Jersey	20	16	2
Totals	103	72	17

Figure 4.1



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The home schooling family survey showed that seventy two families owned a computer. This was 70 percent of the total. Seventeen of the families had on-line services at the time of this survey. Families with internet made up 16.5 percent of the survey. This family survey information is used in the treatment of the data.

The second survey collected data by analysis of narrative information posted on internet homeschooling included e-mail lists and homepages. The checklist used included the following: (1) Reasons for home schooling, (religious or other). (2) Methods of home schooling including a child interest driven learning known as unschooling, or use of a set curriculum. (3) Reasons for using the internet e-mail, recreational, information, and on-line classes. Reasons for home schooling, family size and children ages are compared to Rays' review of the research in the treatment of the data (37:9). Tables concerning package service check-lists are 4.2 for homepages and 4.3 for mailing lists. Information from internet checklists can be found in

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Table 4.2

Packaged Service Homepages

	Reasons for Homeschooling		Method of Homeschooling		Reasons for Using Internet					
	Religious	Other	Unschool	Curriculum	e-mail	Recreational	Information	On-line Classes	# of Children	Ages of Children
A	X			X	X	X	X		1	4
B	X			X	X	X	X		1	7
C	X			X	X		X		1	12
D	X			X	X		X		1	13
E	X			X	X	X	X		1	11
F	X			X	X	X	X		1	9
G	X			X	X		X		2	4, 5
H	X			X	X		X		2	8, 12
I	X			X	X		X		3	3, 7, 9
J	X			X	X	X	X		1	14
K	X			X	X		X		2	7, 9
L	X			X	X	X	X		2	8, 11
M		X		X	X	X	X		1	14
N		X	X		X	X	X		3	5, 7, 10
O		X	X		X	X	X		2	7, 12
P		X	X		X	X	X		2	6, 10
Q		X		X	X		X		2	8, 10
R	X		X		X	X	X		1	11
S		X		X	X		X		1	7
T	X			X	X	X	X		2	6, 12
Totals	14	6	4	16	20	12	20		32	

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Table 4.3

Packaged Service Mailing List

	Reasons for Homeschooling		Method of Homeschooling		Reasons for Using Internet					
	Religious	Other	Unschool	Curriculum	e-mail	Recreation	Information	On-line Classes	# of Children	Ages of Children
Am		X	X		X	X	X	X	2	8, 18
Bm	X			X	X	X	X		2	2, 10
Cm		X		X	X		X		1	8
Totals	1	2	1	3	3	2	3	1		

Table 4.4

Internet Homepages

	Reasons for Homeschooling		Method of Homeschooling		Reasons for Using Internet					
	Religious	Other	Unschool	Curriculum	e-mail	Recreation	Information	On-line Classes	# of Children	Ages of Children
Ah		X		X	X	X	X		2	5, 8
Bh	X			X	X		X		3	5, 8, 13
Ch	X			X	X		X		4	6, 7, 8, 10
Dh	X			X	X	X	X		3	11, 13
Eh		X	X		X	X	X		4	7, 9, 11, 13
Totals	3	2	1	4	5	3	5		16	

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Table 4.5

Internet Mailing Lists

	Reasons for Homeschooling		Methods of Homeschooling		Reasons for Using Internet					
	Religious	Other	Unschool	Curriculum	e-mail	Recreational	Information	On-line Classes	# of Children	Ages of Children
An		X		X	X		X		3	3, 6, 9
Bn		X		X	X		X		2	4, 13
Cn	X			X	X	X	X		2	8, 11
Dn		X		X	X		X		3	7, 10, 11
Fn		X		X	X		X		3	8, 13, 14
Gn	X			X	X		X		2	9, 11
Hn	X			X	X	X	X		3	3, 5, 12
In		X	X		X	X	X		1	11
Jn	X			X	X		X	X	1	13
Kn	X			X	X		X		1	5
Ln		X	X		X	X	X		2	5, 7
Mn		X	X		X	X	X		2	4, 6
Nn		X		X	X	X	X	X	2	5, 7
On		X	X		X	X	X		2	8, 13
Pn		X	X		X	X	X		3	3, 5, 7
Qn		X	X		X	X	X		3	2, 4, 6

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Internet Mailing Lists										
An		X	X		X	X	X		2	2, 8
Sn		X	X		X	X	X		4	3, 6, 9, 11
Tn		X	X		X	X	X		2	9, 12
Un		X		X	X		X		1	14
Vn		X		X	X	X	X	X	4	10, 11, 12, 14
Wn	X		X		X		X		3	4, 5, 10
Xn	X			X	X	X	X		2	7, 13
Yn		X	X		X	X	X		2	6, 9
Zn		X	X		X	X	X		1	5
Aan		X	X		X	X	X		3	4, 6, 10
Ban		X	X		X	X	X		2	14, 15
Can	X			X	X	X	X		6	2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 16
Dan		X	X		X		X		2	2, 5
Ean		X	X		X	X	X		3	4, 6, 9
Fan		X	X		X		X		1	6
Gan		X		X	X		X		3	6, 8, 9
Han		X		X	X	X	X		3	11, 13, 15
Ian	X			X	X	X	X		4	7, 9, 11, 13

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On-line Survey Table Totals

	Reasons for Homeschooling		Methods of Homeschooling		Reasons for Using the Internet				
	Religious	Other	Un-schooling	Curric-ulum	e-mail	Recrea-tional	Informa-tion	On-line Classes	# of Children
PSHP	14	6	4	16	20	12	20		32
PSML	1	2	1	2	3	2	3	1	5
PS Totals	15	8	5	18	23	14	23	1	37
IHP	3	2	1	4	5	3	5		15
IML	9	25	17	17	34	22	34	3	85
I Totals	12	27	18	21	39	25	34	3	100

Table 4.6

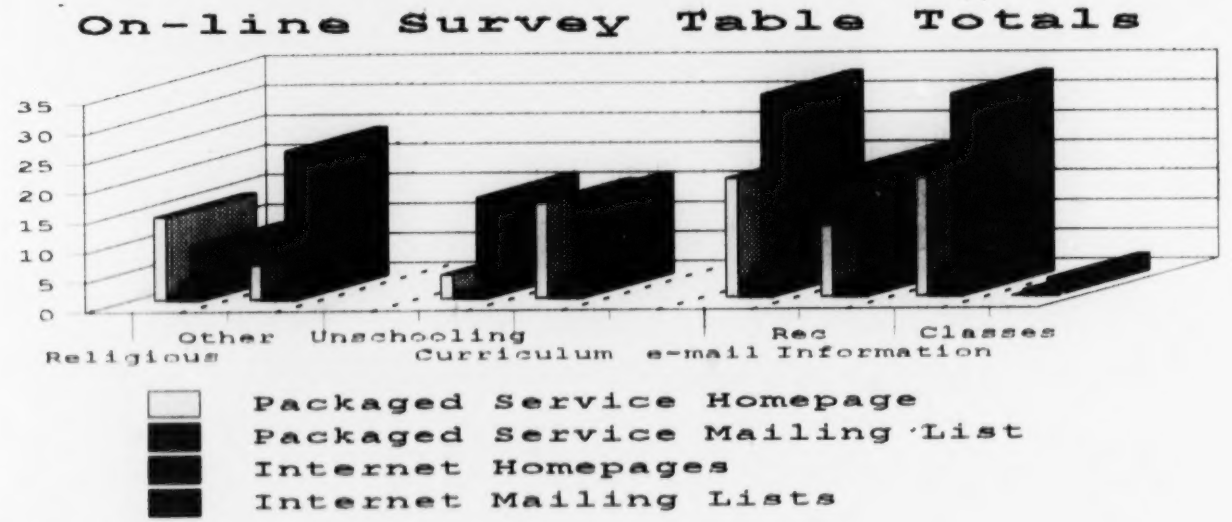

Figure 4.2

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Explanation and Analysis of Data

The data contained in the Homeschool Family Computer Survey were separated and compared in two different ways. The first was to compare computer uses between families home schooling for religious reasons and those home schooling for other reasons. This survey contained fifty three religious families. This was fifty-two percent of the total. Thirteen religious families did not have a computer. Forty religious families had a computer in the home; seven of those had an on-line service. Families home schooling for other reasons made up 48 percent of the survey numbering fifty families. Eighteen families did not have a computer. Thirty-two owned a computer; of those ten had an on-line service. See figures 4.3, 4.4 and 4.6 for a graphic representation of this treatment of the data. A second comparison was between home schooling families within West Virginia and those residing in other states. West Virginia home schooling families numbered thirty-eight which was 37 percent of the total. Eight West Virginia families did not have a computer, leaving thirty with computers; seven of those had an on-line service.

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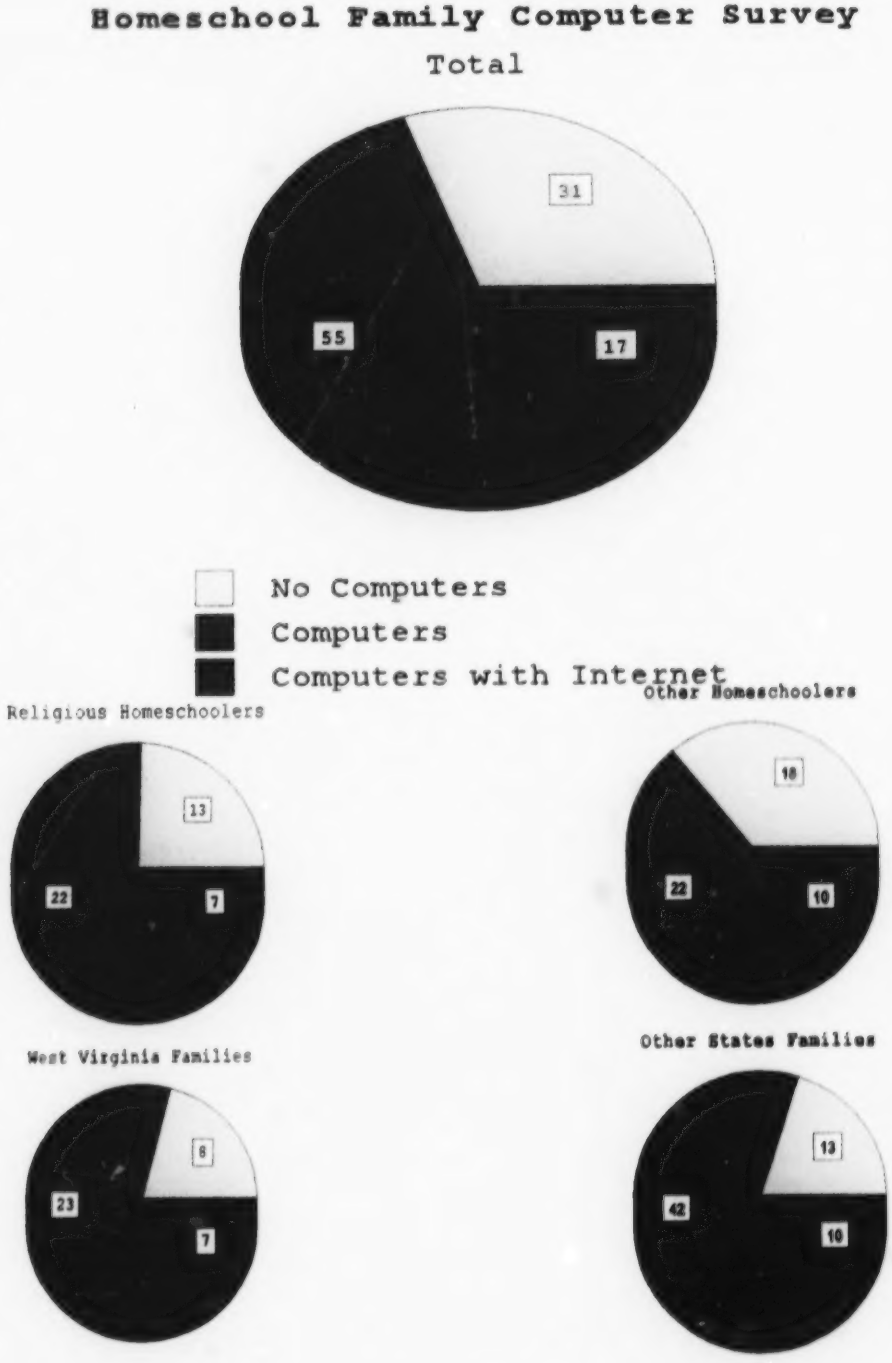
Figure 4.3



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Families residing in other states numbered sixty-five, which was 63 percent of the total. Twenty-three out of state families did not have a computer in their home

Figure 4.4

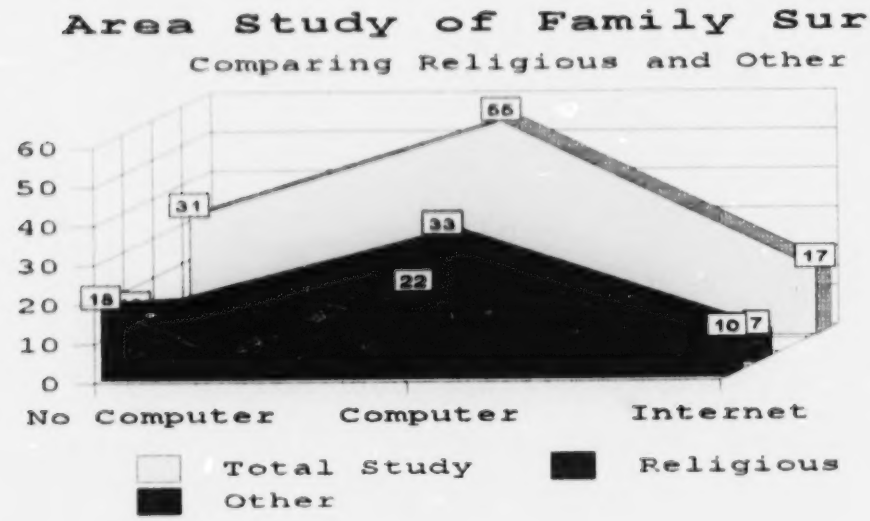
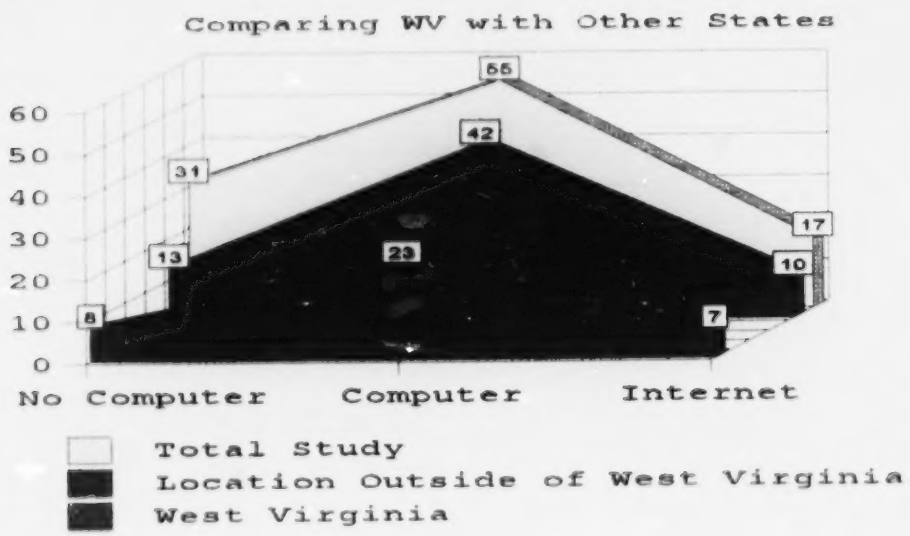


Figure 4.5



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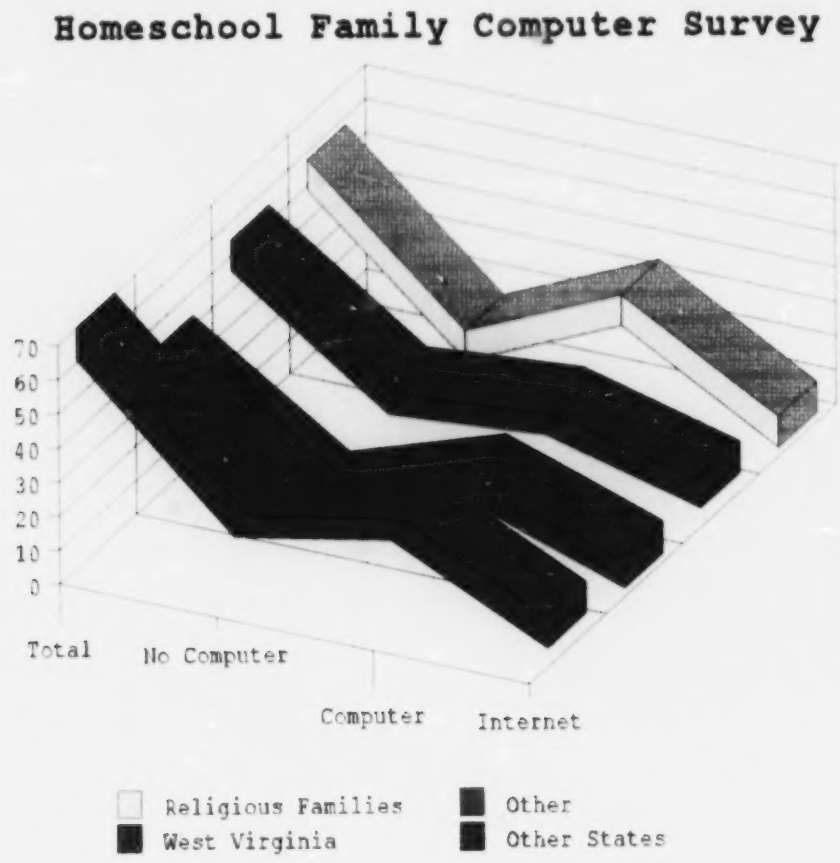
Forty-two out of state families had a computer, and ten of those had an on-line service. Graphic description of this data can be found in figure 4.3, 4.5 and 4.6.

Figure 4.6



In this survey 51 percent of the families surveyed cited religious reasons for home schooling. In 1985 Ray stated that 70 percent home schooled for religious reasons (37:9).

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In the home schooling family survey seventeen families, or 16.5 percent, had on-line service in their homes. Thirteen percent of religious home schooling families reported on-line service. Families with other reasons for home schooling related that 20 percent of them had an on-line service.

Checklist data of on-line information was gathered between August and October of 1996. Sixty-two e-mail addresses were recorded and entries letter coded as found on tables 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5, pages 33-37. Forty-four percent or twenty-eight of the entries listed religious reasons for home schooling while 56 percent or thirty-five entries did not give a reason. Thirty seven percent or twenty-three entries stated that home schooling was either child driven or used the unschooling method. Curriculum based instruction was cited by 63 percent or thirty-nine entries. Graphic data of this information can be found in figure 4.7 on page 44 of this paper.

Uses of on-line services which were surveyed included e-mail, recreational, information, and on-line classes. One hundred percent of the survey used on-line

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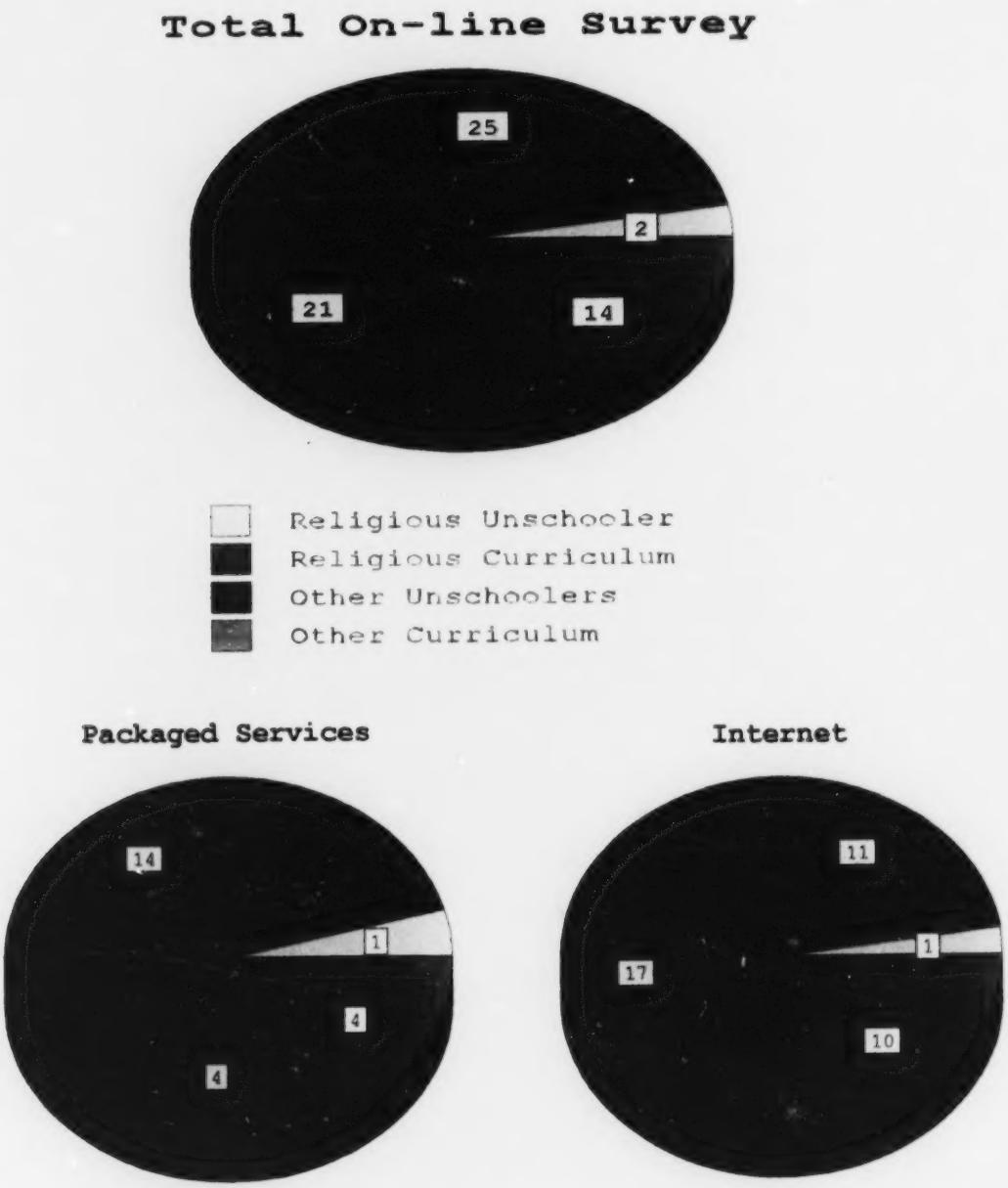
Figure 4.7



services for e-mail. The next highest used service was

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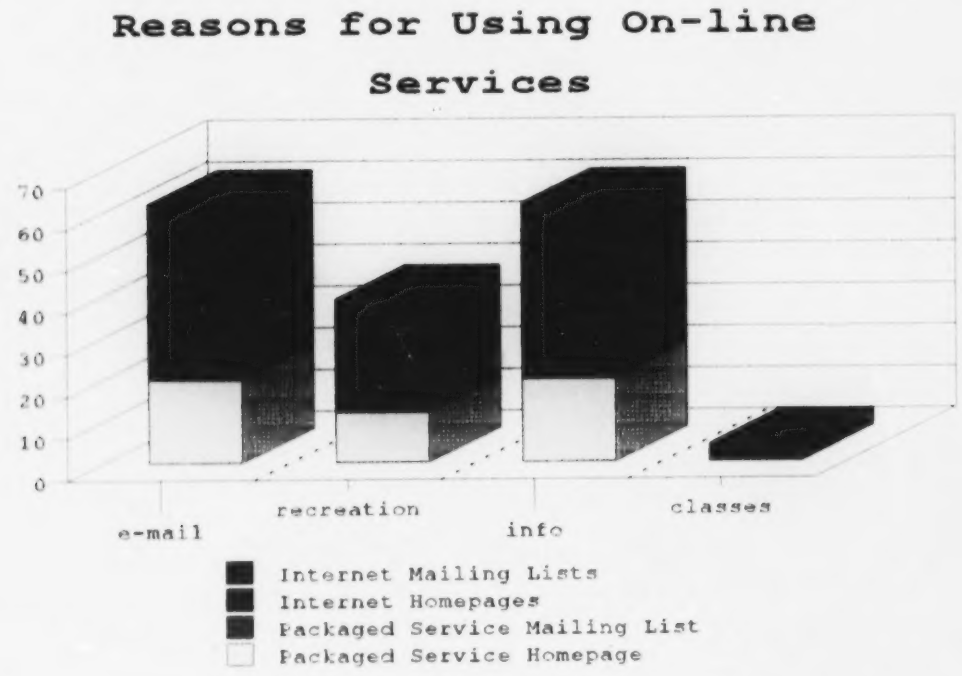
information which was listed by 92 percent or fifty-seven families. Sixty-eight percent or thirty-nine families used on-line services for recreational uses. Only four entries or 6.5 percent of total reported using on-line services for formal classes.

Figure 4.8



One-hundred-thirty-seven children were listed by the sixty-two families. The average age found in this survey was 8.3 years with a mode of seven. The average of school aged children was 9.3 years.

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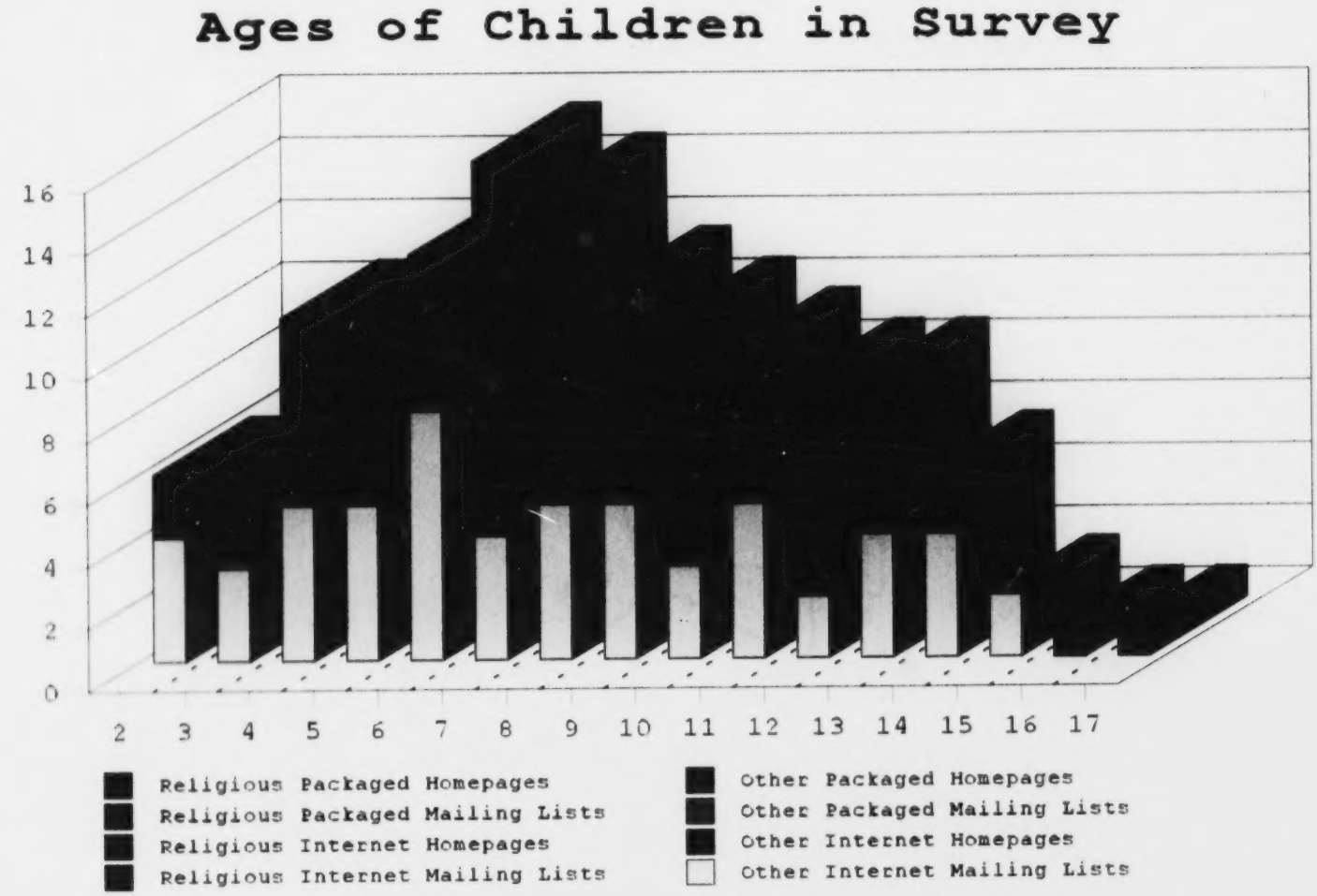
Figure 4.9



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Seventy percent of the school aged children in this survey were between the ages of seven and twelve. Rays' 1985 study reported that 70 percent of the children being home schooled were between nine and twelve years of age (37.9).

Age data were reconfigured in three different ways. The first treatment separated the data by type of on-line service. The mean age of one-hundred children using internet was 8.3 years and the mode was six. The average number of children per e-mail address was 2.6. For graphic information of internet population in this survey see Figure 4.10 page 48. Thirty-seven children were recorded in twenty three packaged service e-mail addresses, for an average of 1.6 children per address. The mean age for this group was 8.7 years with a mode of seven. For graphic information on packaged services see figure 4.11 page 48.

Next, age data were separated by the reasons for home schooling. Fifty-nine children being home schooled for religious reasons were included in this survey with an average age of 8.3 years and a mode of seven. Figure 4.12 page 50, features a bar graph of the ages found in

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Figure 4.10

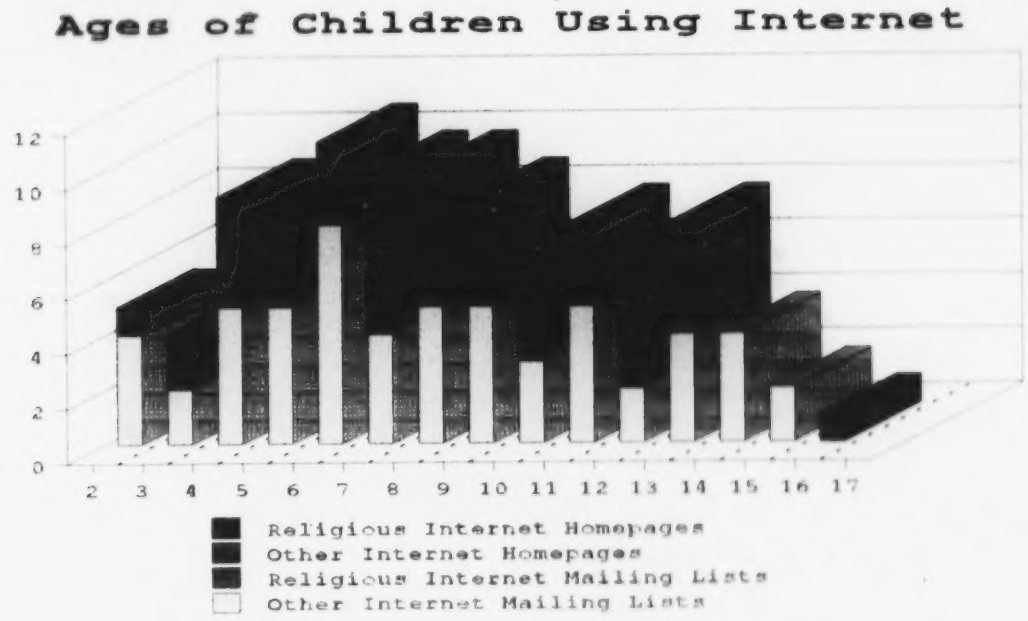
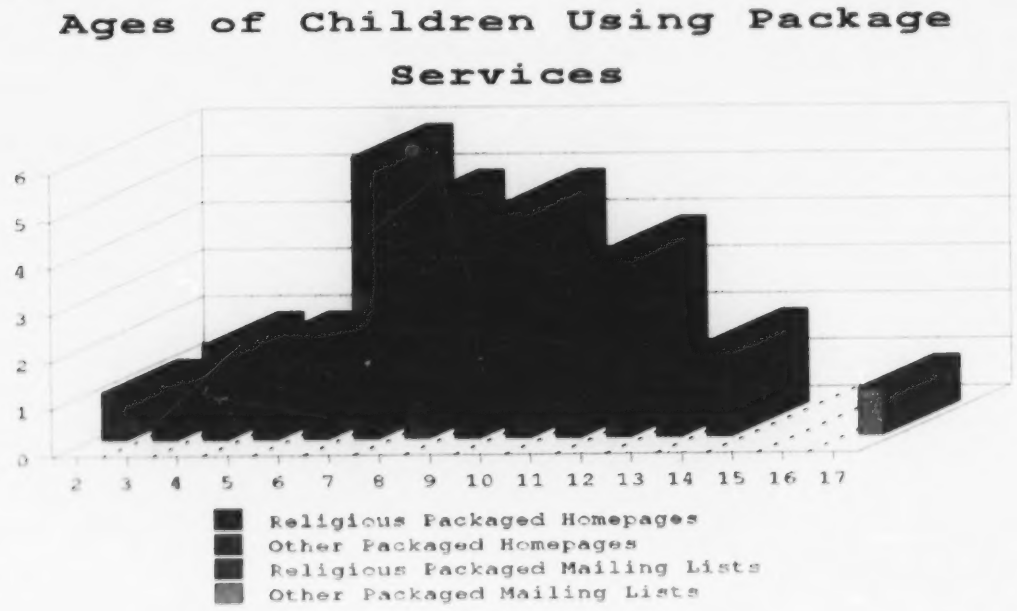


Figure 4.11



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families home schooling for religious reasons on page 50. Sample size of children being home schooled for other reasons than religion numbered seventy-eight. Their mean age was 8.5 years with a mode of six. Page 50 also contains a bar graph figure 4.13 which pictures the information on ages of children home schooled for other reasons than religion.

The final treatment of age data found in the on-line survey arranged children by the method used in home schooling. This treatment compared unschoolers or child directed learning and a curriculum based home schoolers. Unschoolers were identified at twenty-three e-mail addresses representing fifty-two children with a mean age of 7.6 and a mode of six years. Curriculum based home schooling sample contained seventy-eight children at thirty-eight sites. The average age of curriculum taught child was 8.7 with a trimode ages of seven, eight, and ten years. Figure 4.14, page 51, contains the bar graph of the unschoolers ages. Ages of children using the curriculum method of home schooling are depicted in figure 4.15 page 51.

In summary, two separate surveys were conducted.

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Figure 4.12

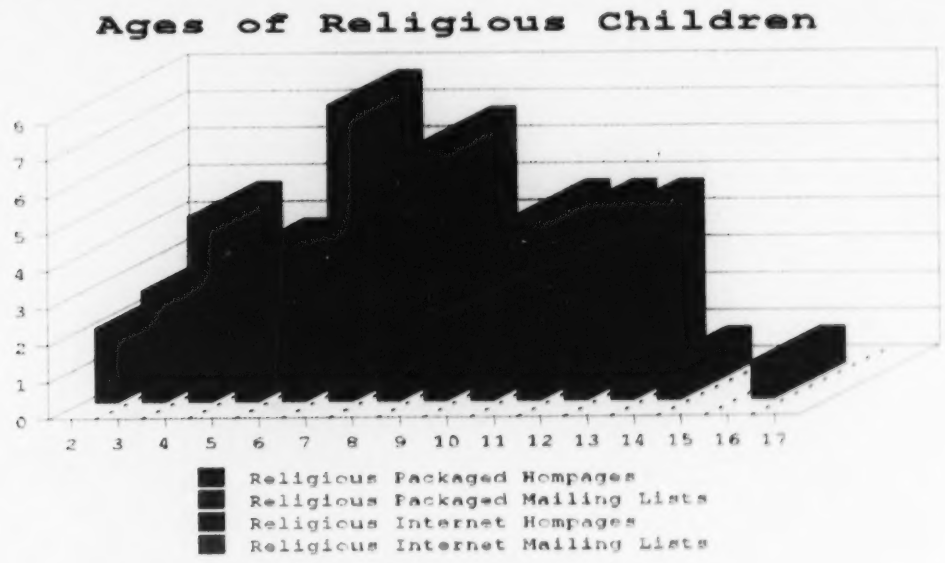

Figure 4.13

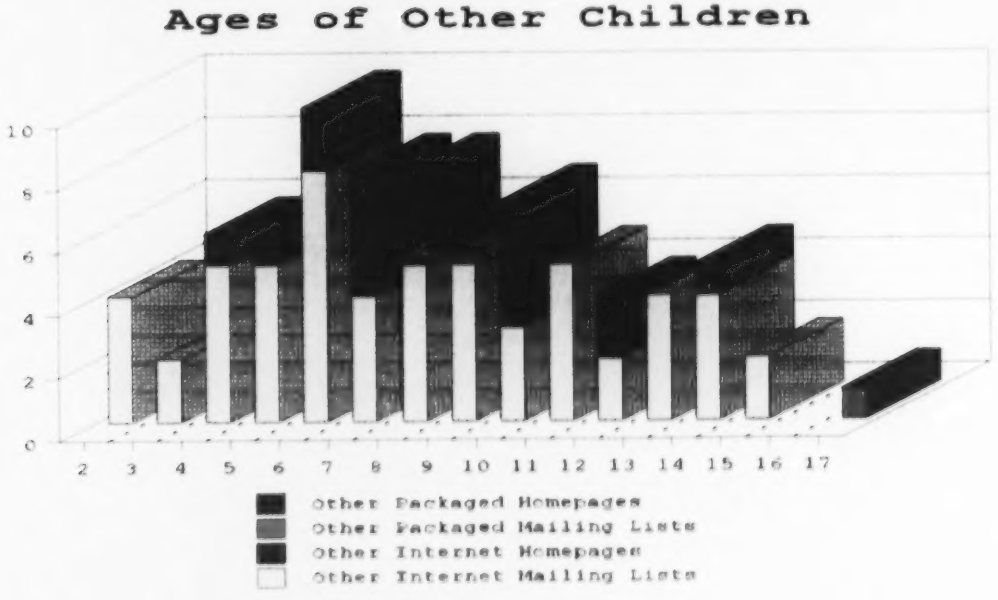

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Figure 4.14

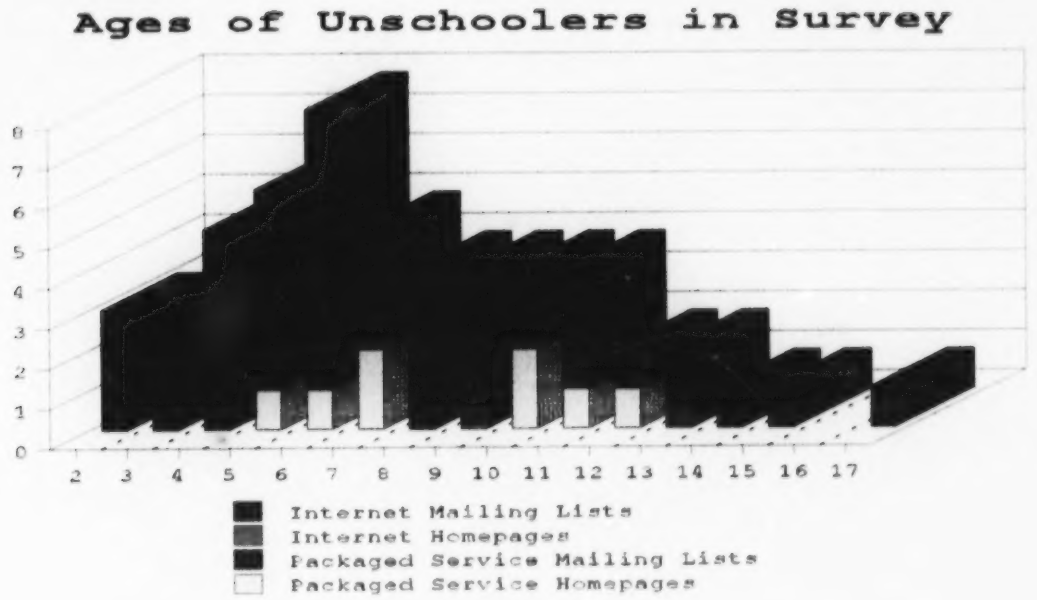
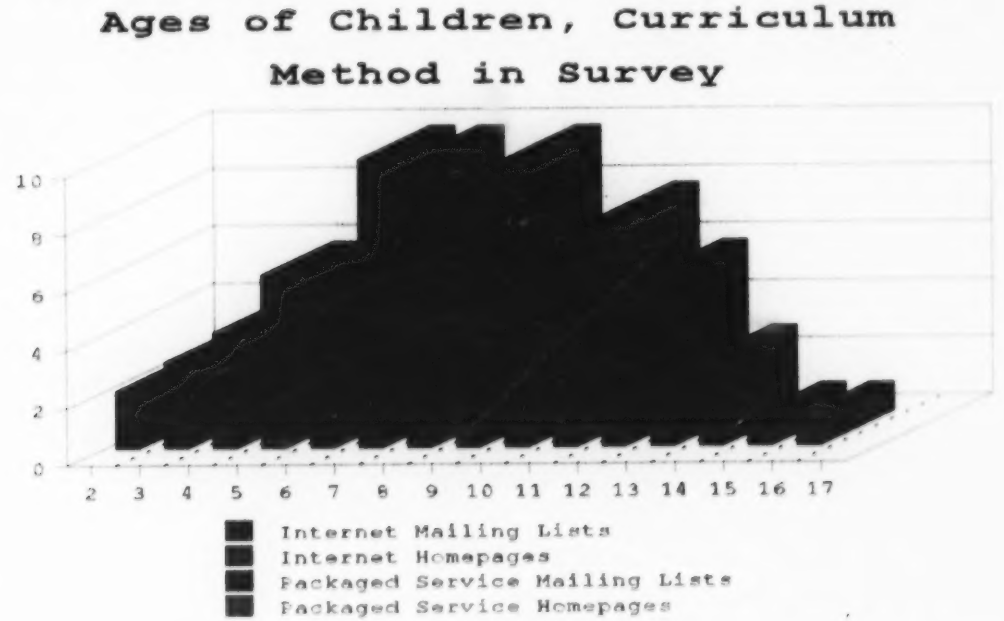


Figure 4.15



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The first was a telephone survey to determine the baseline from a population of one hundred and three home schooling families. The second survey employed a checklist to survey the posted on-line information for and about home schooling. Sixty two sites were surveyed from August to October of 1996. Point of service was determined by e-mail addresses markers. Addresses were coded for this publishing and checklist data was compared in four different ways (1) reasons for home schooling (2) methods of homeschooling (3) reasons for using on-line services (4) ages of home schooled children using on-line services.

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CHAPTER 5

Summary Conclusions and Recommendations

This study used quasi-experimental cohort groups to answer the question of what percentage of home schoolers use current on-line services and how do they use them: for informational, recreational or social reasons? The review of the literature revealed little current data about children who are presently home schooled. To answer the question of what percentage of home schoolers use current on-line services, seven leaders of home schooling support groups were contacted and voice to voice surveys were conducted on the members of the group. These seven leaders represented one hundred and three families. This survey revealed that 30 percent of the families did not have a computer and of the remaining 70 percent, only 16.5 maintained an on-line service. With a baseline established, a second survey of posted on-line material was undertaken and found that ther were sixty-two samples to complete the checklist. This checklist included the following: reasons for home schooling, methods of home schooling, reasons for using on-line services and number and ages of children in the

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family. In the surveyed population, 44 percent home schooled for religious reasons and 37 percent unschooled or did not use any set curriculum. One hundred percent of the survey population used on-line services for e-mail and 92 percent for information. Recreation made up 68 percent, and only 6.5 percent used services for educational classes. Survey data were then treated to compare and contrast the different variables within this study.

During the voice to voice surveys, many comments were recorded. Eastlack, in New Jersey remarked that on-line service with local telephone numbers had not been available until that month. She thought that many families in her group would be getting on-line services soon. Packaged services had been available, but the limitations on hours were not practical with four children using the service. She predicted that on-line classed will be the next *fad* in home schooling. During her ten years of home schooling she stated that, "*first was programed curriculum that was replaced by video courses.*"(48:np).

The group in which the leader's job was computer

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related had the fewest number of computers in the households. Eastlack went on to comment that although they had an on-line service in their home, they had not used it for educational purposes.

Group leaders often were guarded with their answers as their formal groups had grown to fifty or more families. The survey found that as the groups are growing, more segmentation in the home schooling population is occurring. Buey observed that with relaxation of restrictions, fewer families were listing religious curricula in their attendance waivers (47:np).

Based on the data collected on this home schooling population the research concluded the following (1) that families home schooling for religious reasons were more likely to have computers, but less likely to have an on-line service, (2) use of computers in home schooling families across the country was about 70 percent and those with on-line services about 17 percent, (3) all of home schooling families with on-line services used e-mail for social reasons, (4) about 92 percent to collect information, (5) recreational use of on-line services make up about 68 percent, (6) less than 7 percent of the

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home schoolers engaged in on-line classes, (7) packaged on-line services are used more by religious home schoolers, (8) larger families use generic on-line services, (9) the mean ages of unschoolers are younger than that of the total population, (10) unschoolers make up about one third of the home schooling population, (11) about 60 percent of the families with on-line compatible computers had an on-line service.

Based on the rapid changes in computer and on-line service pricing that has occurred since this study was completed, Eastlack predicted, on-line classes will be the next fad in home schooling. As credit requirements for public high schools increase, some regular school students are turning to on-line classes to complement their classes. As technology develops, the line between home schooling and public schooling will blur.

Cizek sums up the findings from the review of the literature, which were that research on home schooling was quasi-experimental or descriptive. In his study, he found that no framework existed to unite their efforts (24:1). Alex calls for more research but admits that *"the population to be studied is not readily accessible*

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to researchers. Types of research that can be done are still limited to case studies of families or to surveys of self-reports by participants," (21:3).

Krumenaker related that while surveys about the Internet proliferate, the population has proven difficult to measure and characterize (7:69). The lack of recent research in home schooling overall created the need for this study. Cizek's study completed in 1993, found that half of those who had pursued research in this area, were not interested in continuing research (21:3).

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